

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

food shortage. Yet the fear of Soviet reprisals kept the Iranian press silent about Russia's part in this crisis. The only voices that were heard in this connection were those that praised the situation in the north in contrast to that in the south.³ To many observers it was dear that Russia by artificially restricting the transfer of foodstuffs was attempting to embarrass the British in their zone. The lack of food in Teheran and in the south had its logical effect on the already existing inflationary trend, and soon it became known that prices in the Soviet zone were lower than those in the rest of the country. The press did not neglect to stress this fact.⁴

In order to help Iran in her difficult food situation the United States and Great Britain early in December, 1942, promised to supply 25,000 tons of grain to the Iranian government. This pledge did not receive much publicity. It was not easy to transport this quantity of grain quickly for the lack of shipping space compelled the Allies to assign priority to combat theaters. In the meantime the food situation was deteriorating. At this juncture Russia took a step typical of her policy in Iran. In March, 1943, Ambassador Smirnov visited Premier Ali Soheily and declared that in view of the needs of Iran the Soviet government had decided to present 25,000 tons of wheat as a gift to the Iranian nation. Praising the generosity of the great northern neighbor the Soviet-influenced newspapers gave much publicity to this gesture, and even the neutral papers were obliged to devote some space to this sensational news. The editor of the *Journal de Tehran*, Javad Massudi, in a move typical of some Iranian newspapermen, hastened to pay a call on the Prime Minister in order to

obtain an interview and hear his comment, which, naturally, was nothing less than a tribute to Russia.

The British Embassy felt the sting. In a news item published on April 10 in the *Tehran Daily News* and entitled "Iran to receive wheat supplies from Russia," the following acid comment appeared: "This wheat will not only take the place of supplies of wheat which in a normal year would have been sent to Teheran from Azerbaijan, but will enable the Ministry of Supply to build up a reserve. . . ." ⁵

3 *Khorshid-i-Iran*, Feb. 23, 1943, in an article "Moans from the Cemetery."

* *Emruz-o-Farda*, July 28, 1943, stated, for example, that prices in Teheran were much higher than those in Qazvin in the Soviet zone.

^{fi} Italics mine.